

My name is Elizabeth Charash. I am 19 years old and attend the University of Connecticut, and I am also a Direct Service Provider (DSP). I am testifying today against the 2/3 budget cuts to be imposed on the Department of Developmental Services (DDS).

Two and a half years ago, I met a young girl named Amanda and my life was forever changed. Amanda, now 14 years old, is one of the most insightful and intellectual young ladies anyone could ever hope to meet. She loves musicals, Disney characters, and anything with a tail and fur. Amanda could list for you every person that ever played Phantom of the Opera, dating back to the 1917 versions. She loves to give hugs served up with a little bit of sass, as she is never afraid to call you out on something she doesn't like.

Amanda also has two younger sisters, Jaime and Katie, one of whom will have already addressed your legislative body. The amount of respect and pride these young women have for their sister will send shivers up your spine. To supply an example, over the summer we all attended music camp at the local church in the community. When some of the younger kids poked fun at some of Amanda's outbursts, her sisters were quick to question these actions. Both of these girls are under twelve years of age, and recognize the need to advocate and stand up for those with a disability.

Amanda also has two amazing parents, John and Christine, who have also testified. I don't think we realize how difficult it is to have a child with a disability unless we ourselves are the parents. Simple everyday tasks like grocery shopping, cleaning the house or even the occasional date night, are close to impossible for parents with a child who has a disability. The near jovial expressions on their faces when homecare was provided so they could go to Target, is reason enough to not allow for these proposed budget cuts.

Homecare allows for these strong and courageous parents, wonderful and brave siblings, and the intelligent and witty child themselves to function. If you are questioning the helpfulness of a program like homecare, I urge you to think of this amazing family. The availability of care allows for Amanda and her family to have a safe and secure environment to live.

Thank you for your time, and I hope that you make the very important decision to restore the DDS budget, and allow for all families with individuals with disabilities to have the proper care.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth Charash', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Elizabeth Charash

6 March 2015

